

Message Text

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, JO, SY
SUBJECT: KING AND RIFAI ATTITUDES TOWARD SYRIA

1. NEWSWEEK DE BORCHGRAVE PASSED ON TO ME SEPTEMBER 16 ON INTERESTING VIGNETTE OF JORDANIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD SYRIA. AT DINNER WITH KING AND RIFAI HE TOLD THEM ABOUT PORTION OF INTERVIEW IN WHICH ASAD SAID THAT JORDAN AND SYRIA MIGHT IN EFFECT HAVE TO RESORT TO HOSTILITIES WITH ISRAEL TO "LIBERATE OUR LAND".

2. IN RESPONSE, DE BORCHGRAVE SAID KING GAVE RIFAI AN AGONIZED "I TOLD YOU SO LOOK". A QUICK CONVERSATION ENSUED IN ARABIC WHICH DE BORCHGRAVE DID NOT UNDERSTAND. RIFAI THEN BEGAN SAYING (SOMEWHAT LAMELY ACCORDING TO DE BORCHGRAVE) THAT "ASAD IS ONLY BLUFFING". LATER KING TOLD DE BORCHGRAVE HE COULD BE SURE THAT WHATEVER SYRIA DID, "I AM NOT GOING TO DO THAT", I.E. PARTICIPATE IN A WAR STARTED BY SYRIA ON ISRAEL TO "LIBERATE OUR LAND".

3. DE BORCHGRAVE, WHO HAS RECENTLY SPENT NUMBER OF DAYS WITH KING, SAID HE BELIEVES THAT RIFAI IS AUTHOR AND PURSUER OF RAPPROCHEMENT WITH SYRIA ON JORDAN SIDE, THAT KING IS MORE RELUCTANT AND THAT ABOVE INCIDENT CONFIRMS HIS THESIS. COMMENT: WE HAVE SEEN SOME SIMILAR SIGNS OF A DIVISION OF VIEW BETWEEN KING AND RIFAI OVER SYRIA. THE ASAD INTERVIEW SETS THE ISSUE IN A CONTEXT WHICH IS NOT LIKELY
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TO ACCELERATE JORDANIAN RESERVATIONS ABOUT WHERE IT

WILL ALL END. WE WOULD GUESS THAT THERE ARE DIFFERENCES
MORE OF DEGREE BETWEEN THE TWO OF THEM, THAN OVER BASIC
DIRECTION. WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT ASAD COMMENT HAS
PROBABLY INCREASED KING'S, AND POSSIBLY EVEN RIFAI'S
CONCERN, ABOUT WHERE IT WILL ALL END. END COMMENT.
PICKERING

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NNN

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